

## Smith, Patrick

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**From:** Diane Merritt [pdm10753@gmail.com]  
**Sent:** Sunday, March 21, 2010 10:39 PM  
**To:** Smith, Patrick  
**Subject:** Prison Issues Board Meeting

I am writing this email since I will not be able to attend the board meeting tomorrow, which I truly regret. I responded within the website but I was not sure whether you would get that one or not, so I will send it again to you with an addition about an incident that happened today during visitation.

There are a lot of issues happening at MSP right now in regards to the inmates and the visitors. The most current thing that is going on right now is shake downs. I understand the need for it, especially if they suspect someone of doing things they are not supposed to (drugs, contraband etc...). I do not see the need for them to be doing shake downs on a daily basis. For the past two weeks, D Unit inmates have had their houses shook down no less than 8 times, possibly 10, since they are starting to run together. There are a couple of the houses that they have not shook down and this is probably due to the inmates housed in those units are known rats. After this had happened several times, my boyfriend, Jesse James Gutierrez asked the Sgt on duty why this was happening almost every day. The Sgt's response was that the CO's are extras, and they need something to do. The Sgt also told him that they can and will do whatever they want as much as they want to. Jesse stated that he was shook down the night before and they woke him up this morning (Sunday) to shake them down again...3 days in a row. The Sgt said it could happen again tomorrow. They tear up and break the inmates personal property, the TV's and CD players etc...and we have to replace them at very inflated prices, in order for our loved ones to have a few things. As a taxpayer and loved one of an inmate I have to deal with these things. Just more money into the system. Then they take brand new things like toothbrushes, T-shirts, tennis shoes and again, if our loved ones are to have these things, they have to buy them, which again is usually money from us! My hard earned tax dollars are going to fund this debacle called MSP. Everything is about the money an inmate brings into the system. There is no rehabilitation. The only thing they are trying to do is provoking the inmates into committing a more serious violation because they nit pick at them about things that don't even matter. Jesse has done 9 1/2 years previously due to this incarceration, which was only a minor parole violation, but they sent him back anyway. Another story. During the entire time he had not received one minor violation, he may have gotten one warning...which do not show up on the records. He has been in D unit for 6 months (was slated for C Unit but moved him to D unit for supposedly a few weeks!) During this time he has been subjected to no less than 4 write ups. Each and every time it worked out to his advantage that they did not have "just cause" for the write up and got warnings instead. We are talking about having too many photographs, passing by a cell and mentioning something to another inmate, not standing in the doorway or in the cell of the other inmate, or talking to someone while in your own doorway a few doors down to someone else standing in their doorway. What is that doing?!?!? Jesse, just like the majority of all the other inmates just want to do their time and get out of there. Jesse knows the rules and has abided by them continually, but this is even getting to him because it is ridiculous.

Jesse stated that there were no less than 8 CO's in his unit today. It takes 3 to man the unit. There appears to be too many people on staff that do not have anything to do. They are standing around the lobby reception desk, gauging at the visitors and making them feel uncomfortable. The Governor wants to cut spending - well, there seems to be a way to cut some spending out at MSP. I am not for anyone to lose their jobs as I have been unemployed for over a year now and it sucks. However, I cannot understand why we are paying salaries for employees to be standing around shooting the breeze. They come into the visitation room and hang out, eat popcorn, by sodas and use the facilities that are meant for the inmates with visitors. Then the machines run out of items and we are left to do without. The CO's have the availability to bring things in with them from the outside. The visitors and inmates do not have this luxury. With all of this "extra" staff that has nothing better to

do than practice shaking down the inmates, I found it amazing that there was an ad on the Mt. website for a correctional officer position opening. Go figure.

Another issue that has just reared it's ugly head is a "new rule" about lockdown. Now, (at least in D unit) the inmates are sent back to their houses 15 minutes earlier than lockdown used to be scheduled. For those 15 minutes the guards sit around and look at each other. They start the count at the same time they have been doing it. This results in taking another hour away from the inmates - and when you do the math, it is 365 hours or a little more than 15 days they lose in a year - FOR WHAT?!?! On Tuesdays this really causes a problem because it is transfer day and the phones are shut off until the evening hours usually around 6:30 - 7:00p.m. The inmates line up at whatever phone works, which is usually one. With almost 200 inmates in D unit, there is not enough time for most of them to make their calls and then they have to go to lockdown at 8:15 p.m. and the phones don't shut off until 8:30p.m. Of course, if they stick to this new lockdown rule, instead they will just shut the phone off at 8:15...that is their mentality!!! This may seem like a small thing, but it is not. It is very important to hear from our loved ones as much as they want to be in touch with us. Being on the low side is supposed to be because the inmate earned a spot there for good behavior. They are being subjected to enforcement that is the same for the high side, very dumb rules and taking away some very basic rights for these guys to do their time and get out. It is like anyone who tries to do good is being penalized by the actions of the CO's and IPS. Everyone is on a power trip at the expense of the inmates.

When they shook Jesse's room down the day of the picture incident, they found a wad of gum, that he was going to throw away but for some reason did not. The Sgt just told him to throw it away. Yesterday when Jesse arrived at visitation, Officer Bills, who is the regular low visitation guard, questioned him about gum and what did he have in his mouth. He always has either a jolly rancher or fireball, which they can have. Jesse showed him it was a fireball. When Jesse left visitation, Bills made him strip down completely and questioned him about where he got the gum they found in his room. How did Bills know about the incident unless they blab things all over? He was not written up for the gum or anything. Jesse said that he did not get it from visitation, that he would not bring anything in or out of visitation because we value our visits to jeopardize them with something stupid. Jesse also told him he would not tell him where he got the gum, and if he told him anything else, he would be written up for lying to an officer. The ending result was Jesse told him that from now on, so they would all know where they stand, he would strip down coming into visitation and when going out, so they would not have to pick and choose which times they wanted to hassle him. Bills is on a power trip anyway and he has a hard on for Jesse for some reason. When Jesse got back to his unit, he questioned the Sgt about why he told Bills about the gum. Of course, the Sgt denied it and said that it must be someone else. They looked up who else was on duty and he said that it must be that person. Jesse asked the Sgt if she was to clear everything she does through him first and the Sgt said yes, and Jesse asked him if she had told him she was informing Bills of the incident, and the Sgt had to say no - because she didn't do it. Jesse also informed them after so many shake downs that the word was getting to the outside and that he would make sure that people higher up would be aware of what is taking place. He will probably arrive back this evening to another shake down.

Today while we were in visitation, we always sit at the same table and we sit the same way - every day. It is very seldom that I do not get this table unless I arrive at a later time. Anyway, today we are sitting there as always, Bills comes up and tells us we have to change chairs, that they cannot see him...which is bullshit. We do as we are told, even as much as it ticks us off, we have been doing this since last September. Lately, when someone asks to go to the restroom, Bills hollers out across the visitation room, asking if anyone else needs the bathroom. Well, today he yelled it out and I needed to go but Jesse was in the middle of telling me something, and when I went to get up, Bills was already headed back from the bathroom. I got up to the desk and I apologized and said that he was too fast getting back to the desk and that I needed to use the bathroom. He looked at me and told me to "wait a minute"....very rudely! Even the other guard looked at him funny and asked if someone was in the ladies, which there wasn't, and there darn sure wasn't any crisis that he was averting by making me wait. There is no reason for this kind of treatment. Are they so frickin lazy that they cannot allow people to go to the bathroom when they need to, instead of treating us all like we are in kindergarten and have

to go in groups!?!? This is absurd. I don't get it. We do everything we are supposed to do, abide by the rules and they still treat us this way.

I truly wish that I could be at the meeting on Monday. Hopefully, we may know a little more in advance than this one and can attend. It is my goal to be at the next one, whenever that may be. Thank you for taking this information with you to the meeting.

Sincerely,

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Diane